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Honors Humanities

Untouchable by Mulk Raj Anand

“The test of a courageous person is the ability to bear defeat without losing heart.” I could not think of a better quote to represent the life of eighteen your old Bakha. The life of an individual in the Bhangi (Untouchable) caste is not easy, and Bakha is no exception to that. Mulk Raj Anand’s ‘Untouchable’ exemplifies the true courage each and every one of the Bhangi face every day.

Untouchables in India spend their days to the most degrading work in the nation. In every society people are needed to clean the streets and sewers, but in India, these people do so without any sort of compensation. The unclean nature of their work pulls down Bhangis to the last of the table of casts. They are not even permitted to take water from a well because of their ‘Untouchable’ status. Bakha and his family are forced to beg for food and money on the street, but if they touch anyone, they are severely punished. To complete this circle of injustice, Bhangi are not even allowed to protest for their rights.

The quote in the first paragraph really comes into play when examining the mental processes of Bakha and his family. Even through all of the hopeless injustice, prejudice, and discrimination Bakha manages to hold onto his dreams of becoming free like the Englishmen and playing hockey. Though these dreams seem very mediocre and obtainable to us here in the United States, it’s simply unfathomable for anyone in the Untouchable caste to hold any sort of life dream, let alone one as grand as freedom. Bakha and his family have faced defeat infinite times during their lives and will continue to do so just because of their ancestral lineage. For these reasons I will always regard Bhangi as among the most courageous people in the world.